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SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME, TERRORISM, AND HOMELAND SECURITY
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INTRODUCTION

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Scott, Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for asking me here today. I am Mary Beth Buchanan, the United States Attorney in the Western District of Pennsylvania and the Director of the Executive Office for United States Attorneys. It is an honor to appear before you today to discuss how the Department has used the important provisions of the USA PATRIOT Act to better combat terrorism and other serious criminal conduct. I will specifically focus today on two of the provisions that are the subject of today's hearing – Section 214 and Section 225 of the USA PATRIOT Act – since those are two provisions that harmonized tools used in terrorism investigations with tools that have been used routinely and effectively in criminal prosecutions long before the passage of the USA PATRIOT Act.

Section 214 of the USA PATRIOT Act allows the government to obtain a pen register order in national security investigations where the information likely is relevant to an international

terrorism or espionage investigation. This provision is similar to the 1986 criminal pen register statute (18 U.S.C. § 3121) that has been frequently used by criminal prosecutors to obtain pen registers and trap and trace devices in a variety of criminal investigations. A pen register is a device that can track dialing, routing, addressing, and signaling information about a communication – for example, which numbers are dialed from a particular telephone. Pen registers are not used to collect the content of communications. Similarly, a trap-and-trace device tracks numbers used to call a particular telephone, without monitoring the substance or content of the telephone conversation. Both devices are routinely used in criminal investigations where, in order to obtain the necessary order authorizing use of the device, the government must show simply that the information sought is relevant to an ongoing investigation.

Pen registers and trap and trace devices have long been used as standard preliminary investigative tools in a variety of criminal investigations and prosecutions. In many instances, these tools are used as one of the first steps in a criminal investigation with the information gathered used to determine if more intrusive forms of surveillance, such as search warrants or wiretaps, are justified. Use of these tools may oftentimes lead investigators and prosecutors to additional suspects or targets in an investigation because of their important ability to allow prosecutors to link defendants or “connect the dots” in a conspiracy or other type of criminal offense.

To obtain a pen register or trap and trace device under 18 U.S.C. § 3121 *et seq.*, a criminal prosecutor must certify that the information sought is relevant to an ongoing criminal investigation, and upon that certification, the court enters an *ex parte* order authorizing the installation and use of a pen register or a trap and trace device. There is no requirement that the

court make a probable cause finding. Under long-settled Supreme Court precedent, the use of pen registers does not constitute a “search” within the meaning of the Fourth Amendment. As such, the Constitution does not require that the government obtain court approval before installing a pen register. The absence of a probable cause requirement is justified because the devices merely obtain information that is voluntarily disclosed to the telephone service provider. Therefore, there is no reasonable expectation of privacy in the information.

Currently under FISA, government officials similarly may seek a court order for a pen register or trap-and-trace device to gather foreign intelligence information or information about international terrorism or espionage. Prior to enactment of the USA PATRIOT Act, however, FISA required government personnel to certify not just that the information they sought was relevant to an intelligence investigation, but also that the facilities to be monitored had been used or were about to be used to contact a foreign agent or an agent of a foreign power, such as a terrorist or spy. Thus, it was much more difficult to obtain an effective pen register or trap-and-trace order in an international terrorism investigation than in a criminal investigation.

Section 214 of the USA PATRIOT Act brought authorities for terrorism and other foreign intelligence investigations more into line with similar criminal authorities by permitting court approval of FISA pen registers and trap-and-trace orders even though an applicant might be unable to certify at that stage of an investigation that the facilities themselves, such as phones, are used by foreign agents or those engaged in international terrorist or clandestine intelligence activities. Significantly, however, applicants must still certify that the devices are likely to obtain foreign intelligence information not concerning a U.S. person, or information relevant to an international terrorism investigation. Section 214 streamlined the process for obtaining pen

registers under FISA while preserving the existing court-order requirement that is evaluated by the same relevance standard as in the criminal context. Now as before, investigators cannot install a pen register unless they apply for and receive permission from the FISA Court. In addition, Section 214 explicitly safeguards First Amendment rights. It requires that any investigation of a United States person not be conducted solely upon the basis of activities protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution. As a result, the Department of Justice must satisfy the FISA Court that its investigation is not solely based upon First Amendment protected activity, which requires the Department to inform the Court of the justification for the investigation.

If Section 214 were allowed to expire, it would be more difficult to obtain a pen register order in an international terrorism investigation than in a criminal investigation, and investigators would have a harder time developing leads in important terrorism investigations.

Section 225 of the USA PATRIOT Act also harmonized the FISA context and criminal prosecutions--in this case extending an important provision used for years in criminal prosecutions to the FISA context. The United States may obtain electronic surveillance and physical search orders from the FISA Court concerning an entity or individual whom the court finds probable cause to believe is an agent of a foreign power. Generally, however, as in the case of criminal wiretaps and electronic surveillance, the United States requires the assistance of private communications providers to carry out such court orders. In the criminal and civil contexts, those who disclose information pursuant to a subpoena or court order are generally exempted from liability. For example, those assisting the government in carrying out criminal investigative wiretaps are provided with immunity from civil liability. This immunity is important because it

helps to secure the prompt cooperation of private parties with law enforcement officers to ensure the effective implementation of court orders.

Prior to the passage of the USA PATRIOT Act, however, while those assisting in the implementation of criminal wiretaps were provided with immunity, no similar immunity protected those companies and individuals assisting the government in carrying out surveillance orders issued by the FISA Court under FISA. Section 225 ended this anomaly by providing immunity to those who assist the government in implementing FISA surveillance orders, thus ensuring that such entities and individuals will comply with orders issued by the FISA Court without delay. This immunity is important because it helps to secure the prompt cooperation of private parties, such as telephone companies, whose assistance is necessary for the effective implementation of court orders. For example, in the investigation of an espionage subject, the FBI was able to convince a company to assist in the installation of technical equipment pursuant to a FISA order by providing a letter outlining the immunity from civil liability associated with complying with the FISA order. Section 225 has been praised for protecting those companies and individuals who are simply fulfilling their legal obligations. If section 225 is allowed to expire, it would be more difficult for the Department of Justice to implement FISA surveillance orders in a timely and effective manner. Because Section 225 simply extends to the FISA context the exemption long applied in the civil and criminal contexts, where individuals who disclose information pursuant to a subpoena or court order generally are immune from liability for disclosure, it should be made permanent.

I thank you for inviting me here and giving me the opportunity to explain in concrete terms how the USA PATRIOT Act has changed the way we fight terrorism. I hope you agree that there is no good reason for investigators to have fewer tools to use in terrorism investigations than they have long used in criminal investigations. Fortunately, the USA PATRIOT Act was passed by Congress to correct these flaws in the system. Now that we have fixed this process, we can't go back. We must continue to pursue the terrorists with every legal means available. The law enforcement community needs the important tools of the USA PATRIOT Act to continue to keep our nation safe from attack.

I thank this Committee for its continued leadership and support. I will be happy to respond to any questions you may have.